

OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS, Their Achievements & Possibilities,

BY RICHARDS BURGES,

General Secretary, India Sunday School Union,

Being a Paper read before the Calcutta Missionary Conference, July 11th 1898, and reprinted from *The Indian Evangelical Review*.



"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME."

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OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS: THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS AND POSSIBILITIES.*

BY THE REV. R. BURGES,

GENERAL SECRETARY, INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

I. The Origin of Sunday Schools.

MANY efforts have been made to decide the time and place in which the Sunday School movement started. The Rabbis declare that Methuselah held the first school of religion in history. But to wade through the "learnèd lumber" of the Rabbis is as profitless as it is fanciful. Setting little value therefore on mere tradition we find *direct* references in the Old Testament to prove that teaching the young was looked upon as a matter of paramount importance. From early times instruction was given to the children. In Patriarchal days the Church and the school were in the family and the father acted as priest and teacher. Shortly after the Babylonian captivity about a dozen different expressions for *school* were used in the Hebrew speech. In Joshua's time the Scriptures were publicly read; in Elijah's days there was a "School of the Prophets;" Jehoshaphat and Josiah ordered the re-establishment of schools for religious instruction; and Ezra had a "Bible School," to all intents and purposes, after the pattern of our modern Sunday School.

When we pass on to New Testament days, proof is not wanting that, connected with each synagogue of the Jews, there was a Bible School. Lightfoot, by very extensive research, has discovered four kinds of schools which existed in our Saviour's days, (1) Elementary Schools, (2) The teaching of the synagogue, (3) The Higher Schools, such as Hillel and Shammai, and (4) Sanhedrin. According to Maimonides the rule existed among the Jewish people that, in every village where 25 boys could be found, a teacher was to be selected and supported.

Coming down to days still more modern, we have historians declaring that "The synagogue served as a model in the organisation of Churches." Schaff also speaks in the same strain: "As the Christian Church rests historically on the Jewish Church, so Christian worship and the congregational organisation rests on that of the synagogue and cannot be well understood without it." Dr. H. Clay Turnbull, editor of the *American Sunday School Times*, makes a pointed remark

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which adds significance to the foregoing quotations : "It would be strange, passing strange, if the Christian Church while retaining the other main features of the synagogue had ignored its very chiefest feature, the Bible School service ; especially as the great commission laid pre-eminent emphasis on the work therein contained." These quotations make us *think*, and will perhaps lead us to *decide*, that Sunday Schools are not as modern as we at first supposed.

Martin Luther established regular catechetical instruction on Sundays as far back as 1529 and these were put into operation wherever the Reformation spread. John Knox formed Sunday Schools in Scotland in 1560. These, with Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf and many more in Europe and America, led the way for the modern Sunday School movement. We are probably more inclined to trace the origin of Sunday Schools, in the exact form in which they now exist, to Robert Raikes, the Gloucester "Consecrated Printer." Some of us are indeed the proud possessors of a medal struck in 1880 for the *Raikes Centenary* and which we wore during the street processions of that great Sunday School day. The more we study the subject, the more we are inclined to believe that Raikes is not to be regarded so much as the discoverer of Sunday Schools, but rather as the re-discoverer. Bishop Vincent is no doubt right in saying : "The good philanthropists of the last century, in digging that they might build a human fabric, laid bare an ancient and divine foundation. Let us rear our superstructure upon this rather than upon their narrow bases and after their scantier measurements." The manifestation of the Sunday School movement *in time* we may not be able to date or locate, but we know that *its deepest source is in the eternal purposes of God*. Like all other such movements, human instrumentality must be looked upon as secondary. God's hand has wrought and His Spirit sustains. As to the length of its life we have no doubt, for as long as the Church Militant exists so long will she owe a training to the children.

II. Sunday Schools and the Religious Tract Society.

There cannot be any question that Raikes gave Sunday Schools a mighty impetus. He was a born organiser ; he knew how to "plan a work and work a plan." By means of the *Gloucester Journal* of which he was the editor he disseminated information about Sunday Schools. He also

used the columns of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and a paper printed on the Continent in which to speak of the cause so near his heart. So much so did Sunday Schools increase, that in four years from Raikes' initiation, a quarter of a million attended the British Sunday Schools. It is a self-evident fact that this vast host of Sunday School scholars and teachers created a demand for pure literature, and to supply this need there came into existence *The Religious Tract Society*, a Society which, by next year, will have had a brilliant hundred year's record. Mr. W. H. Watson, author of *The First Fifty Years of the Sunday School* says : "The extension of education among the people thus commenced by the establishment of Sunday Schools, and aided by the efforts of Lancaster and Bell, led in the providence of God to the formation of one of those catholic and useful institutions which arose about the commencement of the present century and have proved so great a blessing. The institution thus referred to was the Religious Tract Society which, from a humble commencement, has attained a position of commanding influence. In one of its early addresses it is stated that thousands who would have remained grossly illiterate, having through the medium of Sunday Schools been enabled to read, it is an object of growing importance widely to diffuse such publications as are calculated to make that ability an unquestionable privilege. In a subsequent publication the committee stated that, it became necessary to provide for the exercise of that growing ability which children were rapidly acquiring to lead their minds to subjects calculated to please and to purify them, and thus endeavour to convert providential advantages into spiritual blessings."

There is no reason why the India Sunday School Union and the Religious Tract Society should not move forward together in India. With the increase of Sunday Schools must come a book-buying community. Success for the one means success for the other.

III. Sunday Schools and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a great dearth of Welsh Bibles. The scarcity increased with the multiplication of Sunday Schools. A little incident, so well told in *Mary Jones and her Bible*, climaxed the position and led Mr. Charles of Bala to visit London to appear at the

Committee of the Religious Tract Society. Before this Committee he made his plea for Bibles and created a profound impression. Mr. Hughes, one of the Committee, said "Mr. Charles, if a society of this description for Wales why not for the kingdom and indeed for the whole world?" That sentence contained a seed which has now grown into a sturdy tree whose branches spread over all the world and its leaves and its fruit are for the healing of the nations. In March 1804 the idea took shape and the first resolution of the newly formed British and Foreign Bible Society was to grant twenty thousand Welsh Bibles and five thousand Welsh Testaments. For two years the Welsh Sunday School thirsted for the Word and when the cart arrived with its precious burden the joy of the people was like the joy in the olden days at the home-coming of the ark.

Wales has ever been to the forefront in *financing* the Society which had been her benefactor. In the first two years of the Society's existence more than one-fourth of the aggregate collections came from Wales. In 1880, Wales in proportion to her population gave three times as much as England. These statements would not be possible if it were not that the British and Foreign Bible Society is deeply rooted in the hearts of the Sunday School children throughout the Principality. This surely is a great achievement that the need for Bibles was created by Sunday School children, and that this fact has given birth to all the great Bible Societies in the world.

IV. Sunday School Unions and Societies.

It is most natural that the phenomenal growth of the movement should call into existence numbers of Denominational and National Sunday School Societies and Unions aiming at consolidation and extension. The names and years of foundation are given in the following list:—1797, Edinburgh Sunday School Union; 1803, British Sunday School Union; 1809, Sunday School Union for Ireland; 1811, Gaelic Sunday School Union; 1811, Glasgow Sunday School Union; 1824, American Sunday School Union; 1825, Massachusetts Sunday School Union; 1843, Church of England Sunday School Institute; 1876, India Sunday School Union. For the splendid record of these Unions and Societies we must study their reports.

The Union which is of the greatest interest to us is the one whose organization covers our Indian Empire.

I am indebted to Rev. H. Anderson for the following information as to the first Sunday School in India :

"In the year 1800, the associated missionaries, Carey, Marshman and Ward started a week-day School for native children at Serampore ; 40 children were admitted. This was in the month of August. Two months later the children were directed to write out a kind of Catechism, containing religious instruction. This they refused, saying they would leave the School rather than write it,—an attitude which prophesied small hope of a successful Sabbath School work. On December 28th, 1800, the sacred Ganges was wantonly desecrated when Krishna Pal, the first convert was baptized by Dr. Carey, and the following day all the children left the school which had to be given up. Thus closed the first school for natives in which any religious instruction at all had been given. In February 1802 a fresh school was started, this time for the 'education of the children of converted natives or youths who had lost caste.' It was a free-school divided into three classes. This was the basis of the first Sunday School, which, however was not formed until Sunday, July 9th 1803. In Mr. Ward's Journal under date July 15th 1803, this entry occurs. 'Last Lord's day a kind of Sunday School was opened which will be superintended principally by our young friends Felix and William Carey and John Fernandez. It will chiefly be confined to teaching catechisms in Bengali and English as the children learn to read and write every day.' This without doubt was the commencement of Sunday Schools in India."

Particulars as to the first India Sunday School Convention, I have gleaned from the biography of the late Dr. Phillips.

"A grand old banyan tree in the garden was an endless source of pleasure. They never tired of swinging from its long arching roots with the native boys. Under this banyan tree the British soldiers used sometimes to encamp. A second banyan tree near by, in the back compound, was planted by Dr. and Mrs. Phillips on the occasion of their marriage, and under it was held the first Indian Sunday School Convention in 1870."

That banyan tree in Orissa was typical and prophetic of the Sunday School work which has since then spread over India.

"Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow
About the mother tree."

Dr. Scott, Bareilly, tells of the beginning of the I. S. S. U. which shows that our Union has lived 21 years :

In January, 1876, seventy-seven Missionaries and Sunday School workers, representing eight Missionary Societies, by previous arrangement, met in Allahabad to hold a Sunday School Convention. That Convention led to the formal organization of this Union.

Field. The India Sunday School Union is an interdenominational agency. It has a network of organization which covers India, Burmah, Ceylon and the Straits. This vast field is divided into 16 sections, over each of which there is a Sunday School Auxiliary Committee made up of the local Protestant Missionaries.

All the workers are honorary except the General Secretary who is supported by the British S. S. Union.

Sunday Schools in India are conducted in about 30 languages.

The places in which they are held may be suggestive : Street, Forest, Hindu Temple, Field, Heathen School, Mission Schools for Muhammadans, Mission Schools for Hindus, Mission Schools for Buddhists, Hospitals, Zenanas, Industrial Homes, Verandahs, Tea Estates, Coffee Estates, Indigo Estates, Railway Cantonments, Soldiers' Barracks, Hotels.

The work centres in : Churches, Missionary Schools, Industrial Schools, Families, Theo. Seminaries, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A. and like places.

V. The following Statistics speak of progress.

Years.	Schools.	Teachers.	Scholars	Total Teachers and Scholars.
1891 ...	4,608	8,910	1,52,002	1,60,912
1892 ...	5,548	10,715	1,97,754	2,08,469
1893 ...	3,182	5,000	1,25,346	1,30,346
1894 ...	4,957	9,558	1,53,082	1,62,640
1895 ...	4,849	7,440	1,42,510	1,49,950
1896 ...	5,365	8,467	2,07,753	2,06,220
1897 ...	5,538	7,192	2,50,979	2,58,171

Advance in number of Teachers and Scholars in 1897 over 1896 : 41,951.

Organ. "The India Sunday School Journal" is the official monthly Organ of the above Union. It is read

written and edited by India's Missionaries and leading Christian workers. Sent all over the world for Rs. 1-8-0 per annum ; all over Calcutta for one rupee.

Need. India has 117 million children under 14 years of age. Of these only $\frac{1}{4}$ of a million are gathered into the Sunday School.

Objects. Our Union exists, (1) To *emphasize* the spiritual aim and end of all Sunday School effort, (2) To *consolidate* and *extend* Sunday School Work, (3) To *educate* Sunday School Teachers in the best Principles and Methods of Teaching, and (4) To *produce* English and Vernacular Literature suitable for Sunday School Teachers and Scholars.

One of our most recent proposals is a Child's Paper in many languages. The proposal is to have the matter prepared in English several months before the date of publication in the vernaculars. This matter, with six sets of electros to illustrate it, would be sent to language centres where local information could be added. In this way a child's illustrated monthly paper in twelve vernaculars could be produced. The cost to the children who subscribe would, we propose, be two annas a year, and our thought is to bear the additional cost of production ourselves. After careful calculation it is anticipated that a backing of £50 (250 dollars, 750 rupees) a year on each vernacular will be required. Dr. Murdoch, India's Literary Evangelist, spurs us on and puts at our disposal a thousand of the electros belonging to the Christian Literature Society. We are thankful for this but more electros are required and from England and America. IF EDUCATION PROCEEDS AT THE PRESENT RATE THE MAJOR PORTION OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDIA'S CHILDREN WILL BE ABLE TO READ. THE HEATHEN PRINTING OFFICES ARE FLOODING THE COUNTRY WITH LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN. SHALL WE LOOK ON AND BE IDLE?

VI. Sunday Schools and Voluntary Work.

A shilling a day was what Robert Raikes paid his Sunday School Teachers. This he fortunately abandoned and secured voluntary teachers. Bolton and Stockport vie with each other for the honour of counting as citizens the first unpaid Sunday School teachers. To the Wesleyan body is

due the credit of disturbing the peace on this score. Complaints were made that new schools could not be established for want of money. "Let us do the work ourselves" chimed in the Wesleyans. We are thus put under obligations because if the voluntary system had not been introduced the Sunday School teaching of the world would cost an immense sum. The India Sunday School Union is already crippled for the *lack of lakhs*, but its troubles would increase if each of our seven thousand teachers claimed financial payment for his work. But we are glad that the Sunday School teacher holds an honorary position which has much to do with the undying influence of the teacher over the scholar. The Sunday School movement has called into existence an unpaid ministry drawn from the lay element in the Churches. This, it must be acknowledged, is a splendid achievement.

The more one studies the Churches of India, the more one is impressed with the forces that are unused and which indeed are ready for service if tactfully set in motion and controlled. No better field of activity could be presented to Europeans. Their sympathy should be enlisted and co-operation invited. No lady of title or talent should feel that it is any condescension to teach the poorest children in the land. Amongst the earliest of the teachers of New York City were "young ladies, the first in station, in social position and in accomplishments." Her Majesty Queen Charlotte most graciously said to Robert Raikes that she envied those who had the power of doing good by thus personally promoting the welfare of society in giving instruction in morality to the general mass of the common people. Here we have a queen envying a Sunday School teacher. Then too we have the approbation of One higher than any king or queen. "They that are wise (rather those who make others wise, teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

The problem of the *unemployed* is one constantly discussed and never settled. In our churches the spiritual counterpart of this agitation finds an easy settlement. Set the unemployed members to work in the Sabbath School. Call out the latent forces and put in motion new machinery. Hear the words of Dr. Scott, founder of the India Sunday School Union: "Just now we have in mind the splendid field of Sunday School work, opening out all over India

in the Christian Churches, and out of the Christian Churches. There is no call for urging the utility of Sunday Schools, as it is merely a question of how and where to open them, and how to enlist the unemployed in the many openings awaiting them. If the superintendents and teachers could be called out, very many Sunday Schools could be opened for Europeans and natives. In all our large cities and stations, there is much unoccupied ground. Among Europeans outside of the regularly recognised hour for preaching services, what could be more hopeful and profitable than an hour spent in special Bible study? Those responsible for Christian congregations should seek to call out the unemployed ability of many who would become all the more fit for time and eternity, if enlisted in the spiritual activity of good works. Sunday School after Sunday School might be opened, and what more spiritually invigorating to many who are dying of soul-inanity than an hour spent in building up a Sunday School at some convenient time of the day? Besides such Sunday Schools for Europeans, what almost innumerable openings for work among the natives? Scores of them may be opened in any large city or station. Almost any *Sahib's* compound may have a Sunday School in it, among the servants and their children; and others then can be attached. What a hive of holy activity any Christian Church may become, where the unemployed can be called into the vineyard. Why stand they there idle? No man hath hired us. Who is to blame in this case? That all this is a very practical matter, is demonstrated by instances that can be pointed out. There are European congregations in India from which many workers go out immediately after the regular service to active Sunday School work, largely among natives. The work of the Pastor or Missionary is greatly enlarged, the light of God's Word is made to shine out in the darkness, and such a Church is itself like a city set on a hill. Here is something for those interested in Sunday School work to think about. Engage the unemployed."

VII. *Sunday Schools and National Education.*

It is an acknowledged fact that the activities of the Sunday School teachers first created a demand for popular education on a national scale. The following quotation seems to be conclusive. It is part of a formal address from the Church of England Sunday School Institute to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1880: "It is very difficult for us

in this day, accurately to estimate the effect which has been produced upon our nation by the attention which was so forcibly directed at that time (in 1780) to the necessity of the education of the young. We believe that it is scarcely too much to say that the system of national elementary education which has been called into existence during the last hundred years owes its origin in great measure to the persevering efforts of those who were instrumental in the foundation of Sunday Schools.....One hundred years ago it was a rare thing for the child of a laboring man to be able even to read, but to-day we can point to the gratifying fact that, amongst all the 20,000 scholars who are assembled here to-day, by your Grace's invitation, there is probably not one who is in a similar condition of ignorance. Nor is this the only or the chief result of the formation of Sunday Schools. The seed of Christian faith and Christian enterprise which was sown by Robert Raikes and his associates has now borne fruit in almost every parish in our land, and its influence has spread far beyond the confines of our own country, or the limits of our own Church; so that wherever our Christianity extends, the importance of the Sunday School is recognized as the nursery and training-school of the Church; and the zeal and activity of thousands of voluntary teachers have been enlisted in its behalf."

Wider reading on this subject shows that the ever increasing activity of the Sunday School not only initiated the National System of Education but spurred it on at several periods of its history.

India's redemption is not far, if national education can be made the chariot of the "Prince of Peace."

VIII. Sunday Schools and National Character.

In the words of John Bright let the influence of Sunday Schools on national character be stated. "In my mind, the Sunday School has been the foundation of much of what is good amongst the millions of our people. I myself am of opinion that—I will not say no attempt has been made, but no attempt has been at all successful—to show the enormous gain which our people have received from the institution of Sunday Schools, and from the zeal and continuity by which they have been supported. I believe, that there is no field of labour, no field of Christian benevolence, which has yielded a greater harvest to our national interests and

national character than the great institution of Sunday Schools."

IX. Sunday Schools and Penny Postage.

In 1838, Mr W. H. Watson, who has had a greater influence in guiding the destinies of the Sunday School movement than historians credit him with, gave evidence before a Committee appointed by the House of Commons to consider Rowland Hill's Penny Postage Scheme. The argument Mr. Watson used was that Sunday School teachers and scholars would be able, at the small cost of a penny, to correspond with each other. To this argument the greatest importance was attached and it is acknowledged it went a long way in favour of the scheme. The following year the bill was passed into law and conferred a great blessing upon the nation.

Would that our Sunday Schools laid more emphasis on the value of correspondence between teacher and scholar and between scholar and teacher! The Sunday School movement fought for the measure and the Sunday School movement should make the best use of it. In no country on earth are postal rates so cheap as in India and we miss much if we do not call the system into our King's service.

X. Sabbath Observance.

In 1852, 1855, 1856, the English Government were about to pass a bill which would, beyond any question, secularise the Sabbath. The sturdiest opposers were supplied from the Sunday School. The scholars and teachers voiced their opinions by special petitions and resolutions of public meetings. Unusual activity was displayed which gave a remarkable proof of the vitality of the Sunday School movement of that time.

India is a country without a Sabbath. The big wheel of activity rushes on without a rest. On the river and on the railroad, in the mill, and in the street, in the field and in the family we see ceaseless toil all round the year. To give India a Sabbath is a great undertaking, especially when the Government refuses in this matter to take a positive position on the side of the Bible. Happily there are some who honour God's laws more than Government and are attempting to give India her birthright, part of which is the Sabbath. The movement likely to continue to tell most forcibly in this enterprise is the Sabbath School.

XI. *Sunday Schools and the Band of Hope.*

"The story of the origin of the Sunday School has its counterpart in that of the Band of Hope. Robert Raikes, touched by the needs of the street children of Gloucester, provided a means of rescue from a life of misery and vice by founding the Sunday School. The Rev. Jabez Tunncliffe, of Leeds, called to the death bed of a young man, formerly a Sunday School teacher, but now dying a drunkard, was moved with the same compassion, and with an earnest desire to save from a like sad fate the children in his own Sunday School, and in the Schools throughout the world. Recognising that it was easier to avoid the habit of drinking than to relinquish the habit when once formed, he resolved to institute a society for children and young people, founded upon the principle of total abstinence ; and, by the aid of Mrs. Carlyle, a good Christian lady, the movement was set on foot, with the singularly happy title of 'Band of Hope.'

The hope of the founder of the Sabbath School movement has been more than realized. The good seed has been sown, and produced abundant fruit in upwards of 6,000,000 of children throughout the United Kingdom receiving Christian instruction. The Band of Hope movement, younger but still sturdy, has also made rapid progress, and shows a membership in 15,000 societies of 1,800,000 members." These are the words of Mr. Chas. Wakely, Gen. Sec. of the United Kingdom Band of Hope.

When I first came to India I heard it said that the Temperance agitation would not be required. What my own eyes have seen make me believe otherwise, and I am convinced that there is an awful need for more agitation from pulpit, press and platform. "The drink is a hydra-headed monster which it is the duty of the Church to strangle." "The Church should not only take a *part* but the *leading part* in this conflict with vice ;" so says Rev. Alfred Rowland, Chairman of the Congregation Union.

A special lesson on temperance is introduced as often as possible in the Sunday School Syllabus, but I am of opinion that warnings against intemperance should be sounded in almost every lesson taught and sermon preached.

XII. *Sunday Schools and the Value of Childhood.*

No movement has called more attention to the value of childhood than the Sunday School. In the 18th century

stagnation characterised every community. This was specially true of the Church, and most historians put it down to the neglect of the children. With the ushering in of the Sunday School came an awakening to the value of childhood. Government looked upon the child as a valuable unit and saw that the nation's best assets were her children. Agencies were at once established for the preservation of this valuable property. Those ideas have been permeating the nation ever since.

In recent years kindergarten and the study of childhood have given an added interest to the theme. So much so has this been the case that history is now read with a new set of ideas. Scenes of blood in English history have passed by, and out from among other crimes there stands in bold relief the murder of the Princes in the Tower.

"Thus lay the gentle babes girdling one another
Within their alabaster innocent arms ;

* * * * *

A book of prayers on their pillows lay."

Nothing in French history, not even in the annals of the Revolution, calls out more sympathy than the foul play on the son of Louis, XVI. who died of misery at the age of 10 years. The outstanding feature of the destruction of Pompeii is the discovery of a woman who died in her effort to save the life of her babe. "Let the *young* man be saved!" was the heroic decision of the old Welsh coal-miner when he saw that only *one* could ascend the burning shaft alive. "The children first!" was the command of the captain when the life-boats of the sinking ships were lowered. These are the types of incidents which people remember when they read of daring deeds on land and sea.

There is a moment in the moulding process of a bell which requires all the skill of the most competent. Unless that crisis is passed successfully the bell will never ring out a perfect chime. Sunday School teachers have much to do with this critical moment in the moulding process of the child character. If gospel bells are to ring out over this cheerless heathen land we must be all alert at the time of the moulding.

Canon Farrar has set out the facts for us :—

"The children of a nation are its dearest, its best, its most inestimable treasure. Not its coal, not its commerce,

not its gold, not its armies, not its history, not even its freedom, but just its children. For its children are its hope, its children are its future. Its children are the trustees of its prosperity."

J. G. Fitch, M.A., LL.D., Her Majesty's Inspector of Training Colleges, in his masterly work *Lectures on Teaching* read before the University of Cambridge in 1880, says :—

"And for the teachers and for all his assistants, the one thing needful, is a high aim, and a strong faith in the infinite possibilities which lie hidden in the nature of a young child. One hears much rhetoric and nonsense on this subject. The School-master is often addressed by enthusiasts as if he were more important to the body politic than soldier and statesman, poet and student all put together; and a modest man rebels, and rightly rebels, against this exaggeration, and is fain to take refuge in a mean view of his office. But after all, we must never forget that those who magnify your office in ever so bad taste, are substantially right."

"It is said of John Tribonia, the instructor of Martin Luther, that he always appeared before his boys with head uncovered;— 'Who can tell' he would say, 'what may rise up amid these youths? There may be among them those who shall be learned doctors, sage legislators, nay princes of the Empire.' Certain it was that even then there was among them 'that solitary monk who shook the world.'"

XIII. Sunday Schools and Bible Study.

To Sunday School movement is due the honour of rooting into the press and into the people the greatest scheme of Bible study which the world has ever seen. The day has passed when Sunday School teaching may be carried out without system. There are several excellent systems in use. The Syllabus which touches the greatest number is that known as the 'International.' This is by no means above criticism. Indeed no lesson selection committee will ever give satisfaction to *all* the critics. It is said of a king that he neglected his kingdom and amused himself by trying to time all his clocks to strike the hour precisely together. He soon learned that he had attempted the impossible. We can never expect to get all men to think alike on the merits or demerits of a Sunday School Syllabus. Strange to say the loudest critics are those who know least about it. Narrow Englishmen call it a "Transatlantic affair." This is not so. The British Sunday School Union prepared and

published a uniform course of lessons as far back as 1840 which exists to-day in Great Britain for study in the morning Session of the Sunday School. The International System established in 1873 is the joint production of English and American scholars representing the great denominations of both countries. The system is branded also as "a hop-skip-and-jump" method. Such critics are disarmed when they discover that each lesson is part of a course which covers systematically the whole field of Scripture in a given number of years with special attention to the life of Jesus Christ. Though the International Syllabus has many a critic it has the very great advantage, at any rate, of possessing the field. No less than six million Sunday School Scholars are engaged in the study of this lesson each Sabbath. This surely is a reunion of Christendom in actual fact. A vast body of Biblical literature has been called into existence by this six million host of Bible students. Yearly volumes, quarterlies, monthlies, weeklies, in large numbers are now devoted to lesson exposition. Editors of religious periodicals find that they cannot afford to omit lesson helps. The number of secular newspapers is increasing in which lesson expositions are published. The ripest scholarship is placed readily at the service of teachers and scholars. America's best, England's best, Australia's best, yea India's best are engaged in guiding the studies of this great army of Sunday School teachers and scholars. In India about two hundred thousand Sunday School scholars are engaged on this lesson. Leaves with pictures and expositions are available at a low cost in about *twenty* vernaculars.

Arguments, strong and many, come from experienced missionaries advocating the adoption of a Syllabus more suitable for heathen Sunday Schools. Attempts are being made to meet the requirements and no pains will be spared to establish for heathen Sunday Schools uniform lessons on the life of Christ. It multiplies the power a hundred-fold when the lessons in a hundred Sunday Schools are uniform.

XIV. Sunday Schools and Devotional Daily Bible Study.

Devotional, personal, systematic and daily Bible study has been encouraged by the Sunday School system. In 1873, on the adoption of the International Lessons by the British Sunday School Union "Home readings" bearing on the lessons, were prepared and published. In 1880 a

suggestion for an association of readers was considered, but the way did not then seem clear. In 1881 the editor of *Young England* proposed to his constituents to unite in the daily use of the readings. This led to the organization of the International Bible Reading Association in 1882. In the first year there were eleven thousand members. These members have now swelled to a world-wide membership of six hundred and twenty thousand. This total does not include those who use the 29 languages into which the cards of readings have been translated, nor does it represent the millions who follow the readings from the lists published in the Sunday School periodical and lesson leaf literature.

In India we have the readings circulating in 15 languages and tens of thousands of members. The characteristics of the association which account for its success in our midst are as follows : It is inexpensive, simple, inoculates the habit of daily and systematic Bible reading, supplies the mind with a definite thought for the day, proves that the Bible is a living book able to explain itself, prepares the reader for next Sabbath's lesson, stores the mind for next week's League and Endeavour Prayer Meeting, fosters prayer as all the members agree to pray for each other, is free from cumbersome machinery requiring only a Secretary for each School to secure members through teachers.

In India there are vast possibilities for this association, as the number of Bible students is ever increasing. There is comfort in this thought, for we need have no fear of infidelity's in-coming tide, nor of the subtle and indefatigable efforts of the Roman Catholics, if the Bible is prayerfully read by the masses of the people.

XV. Sunday Schools and the Study of Principles and Methods of Teaching.

The Sunday School movement is not taking undue honour to itself when it claims to have persuaded tens of thousands of Sunday School teachers, whose profession is not teaching, to study the principles and methods of teaching. For many years past, both in America and in Britain, there have been in operation institutions to promote such studies as tend to increase the efficiency of Sunday School teaching.

In India there is a splendid scope for work of the same character. It can safely be said that our Sunday School teachers have a very faint conception of the dignity of their calling and the ability required to be worthy of the term

“teacher.” Let me try to express what I mean by quoting from Turnbull’s book on *Teachers and Teaching*.

“It is obviously true that a man may be called ‘a teacher’ without being a teacher. A Superintendent may designate a person to the office of teacher in the Sunday School, or the Church authorities may duly designate him as such, without his being competent to teach. That makes him ‘a teacher’ by the record; but it does not make him a teacher—in fact. Nor does his acceptance of the position tendered him, make the selected ‘teacher’ a teacher. This saying that he is ‘a teacher,’ no more gives him a fitness to teach, than does the similar saying of those who are in authority over the School. ‘How many legs does a calf have, if you count his tail one?’ is a boy’s conundrum. ‘Five,’ answers one. ‘Not a bit of it,’ says the other. ‘Counting a calf’s tail a leg, does not make it one. A calf has only four legs, however you count them.’” Moral: *Calling* a man a teacher does not *make* him a teacher.

It is a matter of deep regret that in India we have so few Preparation Classes in which to teach the teachers not only *what* to teach but *how* to teach. If in some way our Teachers could be impressed with the dignity of their calling, surely there would be a revival in their midst of such studies as would make them more useful in winning India for Christ.

XVI. *The Sunday School as a Church Builder.*

Of course I am taking for granted that all believe there is room for the little child in Christ’s Kingdom. Every kingdom takes care of its children and has a place for them in the nation’s life. The kingdom of Christ is not different from other kingdoms in this respect. Now, if there is room in the heart and the kingdom of Christ for little children the Sunday School teacher should be earnest in prayer and effort to win each child for the kingdom. What surprises me most in my experience with Sunday School work is that teachers do not strive more for this definite fruit. In Great Britain seventeen thousand children fall out of the ranks of Sunday School scholars every week. This is an amazing fact which should ring out as a warning bell all through the world. Only five per cent of British Sunday School children are afterwards found in the Church of Christ. No doubt the reason of this is that we miss the end and aim of all Sunday School work, namely: *Lifting up Christ and leading to*

decision for Christ. We let the golden opportunity pass and do not agonise and teach for the reaching of each!

There are some who will declare that the conversion of children cannot be depended upon. To answer such an objection I would offer a brief letter written by C. H. Spurgeon: "My conviction is that our converts from among children are among the very best we have. I should judge them to have been more numerously genuine than any other class, more constant, and in the long run more solid. I speak of those who are tried and kept under the wing of the church."

Let me say here that I desire this to be remembered, whatever else of my paper is forgotten, that Sunday School work should be looked upon by all concerned as an integral part of the Church. Parent, Missionary, Teacher, should all and always be yearning for each child's definite decision for Jesus Christ.

XVII. The Sunday School as a Pioneer.

Lecky's history of England tells us that the Sunday School must have the credit for ushering in a new century of Foreign Missionary effort. We are not surprised at this. If a loyal host of young people, engaged in earnest study of the Scriptures, did not produce a crop of Missionary Volunteers in a few years and money to support them, we should doubt the genuineness of the Sunday School movement. Thus it comes to pass that the Missionary fires were set a-glowing. The year 1795 saw the beginning of the London Missionary Society, and 1799 of the Church Missionary Society. Down through the decades Missionary Societies have found the Sunday School a fine field in which to cultivate enthusiasm for Home and Foreign Missionary enterprise.

The Vice-President of the American Sunday School Union secretly supported Mr. Gill as a Sunday School Missionary. This Mr. Gill established four hundred and fifty new Sunday Schools, and from these Schools have been formed a hundred Churches. In a Dacca Sunday School heathen girls were engaged to sing in a Bengal theatre. When the performance came they sang only what they had learned in the Sunday School. Entally Church sends S. S. teachers to at least *six* heathen schools. The Old Church Sunday School and Gleaners' Union support a catechist, a Bible-woman and 10 heathen Week Day and Sunday Schools in Calcutta. For 25 years a Singalese Christian has never missed a Sunday as

Superintendent of his Sunday School. In the early days he took a whistle and blew it at the head of several streets in several villages, and gathered the children together for Sunday School. On the spot where the children were taught there now stands, as a result of this effort, one of the finest native churches I have yet come across. This church has a membership of 400 and has 40 meetings a week. A little girl was taken away from a day School and Sunday School where she had learned of Christ, to be a wife in a distant village. Nine years afterwards a missionary chanced to visit that village and found the girl's mother and the rest of the family in full knowledge of Jesus Christ having heard the glad tidings from the girl-wife.

Every Sunday there are tens of thousands of picture lesson leaflets given out to eager children who carry them home to tell others what they have learned and finally to fasten them to the walls of their houses. In the last India Baptist Report I noticed the story of some boys who refused to sing any song at heathen shrines except those they had learned at Sunday Schools. At Singapore, in the lowest slums there are many children who sing the songs they learn in Street Sunday Schools and unconsciously become Missionaries of the cross. In Tinnevely, where the Church Missionary Society has a magnificent mission, several suitable native agents are set free to develop work among the children. It is my opinion that this is the secret of the mission's success. The children are the pioneers; they go where others are not allowed to go and do a work which no others can accomplish. Surely enough has been said to show, if indeed there was need of showing, that the Sunday School children of India are the very best pioneer Missionaries we can enlist in the ranks of our King.

Plato thanked the gods he was a man, a Greek, an Athenian, and that he lived in the age of Socrates. We have reason to thank God for more than this. We live in these "latter days" with an "opulent opportunity" presenting itself. Vast is the vista that opens before our vision. Surely India is at the feet of the Sunday School teachers. Standing as we do at the gate of the 20th century let us try to realise that the measure of our opportunity is the measure of our responsibility. Let us show by *life* and *lesson*, always and everywhere, that Christ is better than Krishna and a greater Redeemer than Ram.



